**INFERENCING: A COMMUNITY FOCUS**

**Directions:** This work is to be completed **INDIVIDUALLY** and on you **OWN PAPER**. Read each of the three passages, answer the questions that go with each passage, and rewrite each of the paragraphs, filling in the blanks as you go. Write the title of the passage on your paper and number the questions.

**Little Things are Big** by Jesus Colon

"I’ve been thinking; you know, sometimes one thing happens to change your life, how you look at things, how you look at yourself. I remember one particular event. It was when? 1955 or '56...a long time ago. Anyway, I had been working at night. I wrote for the newspaper and, you know, we had deadlines. It was late after midnight on the night before Memorial Day. I had to catch the train back to Brooklyn; the West side IRT. This lady got on to the subway at 34th and Penn Station, a nice looking white lady in her early twenties. Somehow she managed to push herself in with a baby on her right arm and a big suitcase in her left hand. Two children, a boy and a girl about three and five years old trailed after her.   
  
Anyway, at Nevins Street I saw her preparing to get off at the next station, Atlantic Avenue. That’s where I was getting off too. It was going to be a problem for her to get off; two small children, a baby in her arm, and a suitcase in her hand. And there I was also preparing to get off at Atlantic Avenue. I couldn’t help but imagine the steep, long concrete stairs going down to the Long Island Railroad and up to the street. Should I offer my help? Should I take care of the girl and the boy, take them by their hands until they reach the end of that steep long concrete stairs?  
  
Courtesy is important to us Puerto Ricans. And here I was, hours past midnight, and the white lady with the baby in her arm, a suitcase and two white children badly needing someone to help her.   
  
I remember thinking; I’m a \*Negro and a Puerto Rican. Suppose I approach this white lady in this deserted subway station late at night? What would she say? What would be the first reaction of this white American woman? Would she say: 'Yes, of course you may help me,' or would she think I was trying to get too familiar or would she think worse? What do I do if she screamed when I went to offer my help? I hesitated. And then I pushed by her like I saw nothing as if I were insensitive to her needs. I was like a rude animal walking on two legs just moving on, half running along the long the subway platform, leaving the children and the suitcase and the woman with the baby in her arms. I ran up the steps of that long concrete stairs in twos and when I reached the street, the cold air slapped my warm face.  
  
Perhaps the lady was not prejudiced after all. If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you, dear lady. If you were not that prejudiced I failed you; I failed you too, children. I failed myself. I buried my courtesy early on Memorial Day morning.   
  
So, here is the promise I made to myself back then: if I am ever faced with an occasion like that again, I am going to offer my help regardless of how the offer is going to be received. Then I will have my courtesy with me again."

\* The word Negro was commonly used in the early and middle years of the last century to refer to an African American. Its use reflects the time period.

**For Jesus Colon’s “Little Things are Big”**

**Answer the following questions in complete sentences on your own sheet of paper.**

1. Though the narrator doesn’t state it directly, using your inferencing skills, why does he hesitate to help the woman? What evidence supports you inference?
2. What can you infer about this woman and her young children? Why do you think she was on the subway alone at that time of night? What evidence supports your inference?
3. Based on the date of this piece, what can you infer about racial tension? Explain.

**Rewrite this paragraph, filling in the blanks, on your own sheet of paper. (Note: This is like the synthesis paragraph we did last week).**

In Jesus Colon’s “Little Things are Big”, the reader hears the account of a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(race) man on a subway in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(the year). Based on the text and my knowledge of the time period I know that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(what can you tell me about racial tension at the time?). Because of the tension, the man\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (how does he react) when he sees a young woman with small children on the subway \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (time of day). It is likely that the woman\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (what was she doing?) and needed help, but he was hesitant to help her because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(explain). Ultimately, the man does not help the woman because\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (why not?) In the end, he pledges to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(what does he pledge to do) if he is ever faced with this kind of scenario again because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

MY MOTHER by Robert Mezey

My mother writes from Trenton,

a comedian to the bone

\*a mensch is an upright; responsible, mature person

but underneath serious

and all heart. Honey, she says,

be a mensch\* and Mary too,

It’s no good, to worry, you

are doing the best you can

your Dad and everyone

thinks you turned out very well

as long as you pay your bills

nobody can say a word

you can tell them, to drop dead

so save a dollar it can’t

hurt remember Frank you went

to highschool with? he still lives

with his wife’s mother, his wife

works while he writes his books and

did he ever sell a one

the four kids run around naked

36, and he’s never had,

You’ll forgive my expression

even a pot to piss in

or a window to throw it,

such a smart boy he couldn’t

read the footprints on the wall

honey you think you know all

the answers you don’t, please, try

to put some money away

believe me it wouldn’t hurt

artist schmartist life’s too short

for that kind of, forgive me,

crap, I know what you want

better than you, all that counts

is to make a good living

and the best of everything,

as Sholem Aleichem said,

he was a great writer did

you ever read his books dear,

you should make what he makes a year

anyway he says some place

Poverty is no disgrace

but it’s no honor either

that’s what I say,

love,

Mother

**For the poem “My Mother” by Robert Mezey**

**Answer the following questions in complete sentences on your own sheet of paper.**

1. What can you infer about the type of mother this is? Support that inference with evidence.
2. Though the poem doesn’t state it directly, how old do you believe this mother’s child is? What evidence led you to draw that inference?
3. What do you believe was the impetus (the thing) that prompted this letter? Explain, citing evidence.

**Rewrite this paragraph and fill in the blanks with your ideas and evidence—to this on your own sheet of paper.**

While I was able to draw many inferences from this poem, I believe the most important inference was\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This idea is supported with evidence from the text, such as\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. As I consider this, it helps make the poem more clear to me and I can see that the relationship between the mother and her child is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In some ways, this connects to “Two Kinds”, the short story we read last week because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**School Cell Phone Ban Causes Uproar**

Feb. 9th, 2009

(AP) Elizabeth Casanola carries her cell phone everywhere — even through the metal detectors at her school.  
  
The high school senior puts the phone under her pants by her waistline, where she knows she won't be patted down. Or she smuggles the phone into school in pieces — the battery separate from the main body.  
  
A ban on cell phones in the nation's biggest school system is creating an uproar among parents and students alike, with teenagers sneaking their phones inside their lunches and under their clothes, and grown-ups insisting they need to stay in touch with their children in case of another crisis like Sept. 11.  
  
Parents have written angry letters and e-mails, staged rallies and news conferences, and threatened to sue. Some City Council members are introducing legislation on their behalf.  
  
But Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein have staunchly refused to drop the ban. They insist cell phones are a distraction and are used to cheat, take inappropriate photos in bathrooms and organize gang rendezvous. They are also a top stolen item.  
  
Students have refused to give up their phones, saying the devices have become too vital to their daily existence and to their parents' peace of mind.  
  
"My mother, she needs me to have the cell to call me and check up on me," said Steven Cao, 16, a sophomore who lives in Staten Island and attends Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan. He called the ban stupid.  
  
Some parents would prefer a policy that lets students have cell phones but prohibits their use in classes.  
  
New York's 1.1-million-student school system has banned beepers and other communication devices since the late 1980s. But schools have long used an "out-of-sight, out-of-trouble" approach. Then, late last month, city officials began sending portable metal detectors every day to a random but small set of schools to keep out weapons. And the detectors have led to the confiscation of hundreds of cell phones.  
  
New York has one of the country's toughest policies on student cell phones. It also bans other electronic devices, such as iPods.  
  
Detroit bans cell phones, and a two-time violator will not get the phone back. Boston relied on a school-by-school approach until recently, when it changed the policy to let students have a phone, but only if it is turned off and out of sight. Los Angeles lets kids have cell phones, but they can use them only during lunch and breaks.  
  
Kenneth Trump, president of Ohio-based National School Safety and Security Services, said his research indicates most schools ban the phones. Others require students to turn off the devices during school hours.  
  
New York principals said the ban is tough to enforce, especially in large schools without metal detectors.  
  
"Every kid today does carry a cell phone," said Howard Lucks, principal of New Utrecht High in Brooklyn. "The kids keep them in their backpacks, their pockets. As soon as they see an administrator or teacher, they put it away very quickly."  
  
Even at schools with permanent metal detectors, students find ways to sneak the phones inside.  
  
Once inside the school, another tactic is to hide the phone in a sandwich roll, according to one principal. Some students leave phones at nearby stores that charge small holding fees.  
  
Yen Ramirez, a junior at Manhattan's Washington Irving High, said students need their phones for emergencies. The ban is a problem "because you never know what could happen."  
  
Students insist that most classmates use their cell phones responsibly, and they brush off criticism that previous generations got along fine without them.  
  
"It's kind of ridiculous that we think we can't survive without a cell phone when people did it for thousands of years," said Elisa Muyl, 14, a freshman at Stuyvesant. "But now that they have this invention, we should use it."

**For “School Cell Phone Ban Causes Uproar”**

**Answer the following questions in complete sentences on your own sheet of paper.**

1. Based on the fact that Elizabeth Casanola smuggles her cell phone in to school, what can you infer? Explain.
2. Elizabeth can sneak her phone into the building by hiding it in her waistline. What can you infer is the reason that she won’t be patted down? Explain.
3. It seems that administration and students have very different thoughts about the cell phone ban. What do you believe makes for this divide in opinion? Explain using evidence from the text.

**Rewrite the paragraph and fill in the blanks on your own sheet of paper.**

In some of the nation’s largest school districts, in cities like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ cell phones are banned. One can infer that the primary reason for this ban is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, especially since metal detectors are in place in many of these schools. However, students feel that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Likely, the reason that parents are upset about the ban is because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. While it is true that people existed without cell phones for many years, our means of communication has changed dramatically. Administrators, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, (make an inference about their age) are not in touch with the changing world of technology.